

INDOLOGY AS MAIEUTICS

Some Indian Contributions to a New Image of Man

1. While carrying on researches in Indian metaphysics¹ one cannot but be amazed by the stupendous richness of its illuminations regarding the possibilities of human development. We too, having fallen under the spell of so marvellous a wealth of doctrines, have been trying in the last years to draw an ample comparative synthesis of those traditions, preparing a book where the various paths leading from human condition to its transcendence are put together in a system as coherent as possible. The present paper is devoted to an analysis of only one significant aspect of this really inexhaustible subject: the contribution that Indian thought can give to the shaping of a new image of man².

By virtue of its very existence and nature, Indian metaphysics puts a challenge to the *Sitz im Leben* of modern man, to his deeply-rooted immanentism, to his historically-minded way of thinking. But the maieutic function of Indian studies goes far beyond this negative aspect. Although the overcoming of human condition is the avowed goal of Indian metaphysics, its traditions can at least incidentally give positive suggestions for a different and more up-to-date anthropology. It is our established conviction that some of these suggestions are more consistent with the most solid results of scientific research than many ideas still enjoying wide currency in the West.

Not only that: such a new anthropology is badly needed. In our time, natural and human sciences are undergoing an exponential devel-

1. We use this word to embrace all Indian traditions aiming at reaching freedom from *samsāra*. This unitary approach does not imply any disregard for the deep differences existing among Hindus, Buddhists, Jainas, etc., but, in our opinion, these differences cannot obliterate the presence of many common elements.

2. We subscribe to the words of E. Deutsch: « There exists a close relationship between the kind of conception one has of oneself as a human being and the kind of human being one is » (E. DEUTSCH, *Humanity and Divinity, An Essay in Comparative Metaphysics*, Honolulu, 1970, p. 110).

opment: important perspectives have emerged, new sciences (semiotics, ethology, etc.) have reached academic recognition... But this exceptional development has not led to the shaping of a new and coherent image of man and of his position in the world. When out of the field of his specialization, almost every scholar, scientist, philosopher — or philo-somatist?³ — falls back into the common man's candid materialism, or rather, into the ancient fault of Virocana.

This ever-increasing gap between science and technology, on one side, and consciousness, on the other, carries along with itself a very serious danger. In a world which, at least in industrialized countries, is generally no longer felt as the manifestation of a divine being or of his creative will, man is left relatively free and dramatically alone. While traditional cultures are flaking off, man generally seems unable to face the need of a new mentality and to link himself with an adequate sense of responsibility to other people and to his environment. So, while petty but threatening feuds explode almost every day, no other reason but a reciprocal fear seems to stop men on the fringe of catastrophe. Besides, material progress itself, with its pollution and exploitation of the natural resources, etc., has become a kind of cancer for earth.

To face this danger palliatives are useless. A new appraisal of the nature, position and aims of man is necessary.

In an Indological Journal, it is superfluous to insist upon the importance that a wider knowledge of Indian spirituality can have to dispel the dangerous conceptions mentioned above. (This, however, is not tantamount to an acknowledgement of Indian metaphysics as a paradigmatic model, as some traditionalists would like to do. If it will ever arise, the future world-culture, like Goethe's God, must be superior, at least in our opinion, to any spatial delimitation, it shall involve a synthesis of Eastern and Western elements, and *much more else*. Only a transcultural work can gather the positive contributions of the individual cultures, inserting them within the frame of a more up-to-date complex. Another and not the least contribution of this work will quite probably be an increased capacity of deconditioning out of the narrow ethnocentric preconceptions of one culture).

Among the large and various fields in which Indian culture can give a useful contribution, there are some, pertaining to the borderlands of psychology⁴, which seem to offer an immediate opportunity of success for a strategy of attack, blowing up ancient and unfounded certainties. We are referring here to parapsychology, which we would like to call

3. Cf. PLATO, *Phaidon*, XIII: «οὐκ φιλόσοφος, ἀλλὰ . . . φιλοσωματος»

4. In the same field of psychology useful insights could quite probably be gained from the tāntrik approach to man as a bi-unitary individual (cf. e.g. H. V. GUENTHER, *Yuganaddha*, Varanasi, 1969², pp. 9-13, 23-8, etc.).

the last, historically, and final, because it deals with the boundaries of psychism, among human sciences.

We do know that parapsychology is still widely discussed⁵ and even more widely ignored⁶, although it has already made in different countries its way up to University chairs. But this disregard seems to us parapsychologists have elaborated a sophisticated methodology to discover them), there remains, in the past and now, a huge amount of wrong and dangerous: apart from any possible illusion and fraud (and phenomena discouraging any unprejudiced skepticism whatever, provided that a sufficient acquaintance with this matter is reached. And if these phenomena are real, need they not be integrated into a new image of man and of his psychism?

The present paper is interested in outlining the intellectual frame in which these phenomena have been understood and valued rather than in telling facts and feats of which Indian tradition offers such an exceptionally rich treasure. Wishing to do a work as least controversial as possible, we have decided to avoid discussion of such phenomena, whatever their relevance may be, which might be more open to doubts and disputes, like the alleged, and in our opinion sometimes rather impressing, Indian evidence of rebirth⁷, etc.

2. The conception of time prevailing in the West among the non-specialists can be suitably described as a succession of moments that run from the past, which is no longer, towards the future, which is not yet, passing through the tangible reality of a single point, the present. This idea has certainly satisfied since long the existential needs of everyday life, but its validity is shaken by, say, a paranormal phenomenon like precognition. Moreover, the irreversibility of time, even if it seems supported by the second law of thermodynamics, appears unable to overcome any serious examination, both on the cosmic scale, as L. Boltzmann already saw at the end of the XIXth century, and on the infinitesimal one⁸.

5. Cf. for instance the volumes of C. E. M. HANSEL, *ESP, A Scientific Evaluation*, New York, 1966, P. ANGELA, *Viaggio nel mondo del paranormale*, Milan, 1978, the monographic issue of « Ulysse » on parapsychology (No. 88, 1980), etc. Parapsychologists have replied many times, with words and works, to these criticisms: in our opinion, on the whole successfully.

6. Here as in so many other fields man is likely to see what he is culturally prepared to see: and our culture, perhaps every culture, is largely based on remotion (in our culture there is a widely spread remotion of paranormal phenomena, of the very idea of possibility and value of ecstasis, etc.).

7. Cf. I. STEVENSON, *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*, ital. transl. (*La reincarnazione: venti casi a favore*), Milan, 1975; etc.

8. That time has now become a problem in our culture is evidenced by the increasing number of books that deal with it either presenting its conceptions (cyclical, etc.) in non-Western cultures, like the well-known studies by M. Eliade, or trying to cope with the difficulties arising from contemporary physics. J. W. Dunne's books on his experiments with time and on the serial universe and J. B. Priestley's *Man and Time* (London, 1964) are only isolated instances of an important line of personal developments on this subject.

Now, Indian culture has a lot to say in this field, both for what concerns the understanding of time, and for what regards its overcoming (or the exploiting of some of its unusual dimensions), in order to reach paranormal cognitions which, while being erratic occurrences in the West, are frankly recognised as being within the range of human capabilities in India (they are searched after in some traditions, avoided in others, but always faced with proper training). It is therefore to be expected that some Indian doctrines can better than ours meet with the challenge presented by the very existence of precognition and allied phenomena. First of all, this is the case with the doctrine of *satkārya-vāda* which looks at effects as inherent in their causes.

Beside these at least apparent exceptions to the unidirectional flowing of time, there are also their counterparts, consisting in getting some sort of knowledge about past events otherwise unknowable, a knowledge obtained through a kind of vision of these events as contemporary ones, or through a perception of being present at the very moment of their taking place. Perhaps some good-euristics suggestions concerning the real, *vyāvahārika* nature of time could be gained from Indian doctrines of the gnostic type, like those teaching the existence of multiple levels of reality and the participation of the conscious subject in these different planes of being⁹, or like the doctrines of Kāśmir Śaivism, according to which time is but one among the cuirasses of the divine Spirit, having the function to divide the manifestations and make them to follow one another. Whoever is able, by an operation of *kāla-grāsa*, to transcend this order and its secondary divisions, as so many *siddhas* and saints are said to have done in India, reinstating themselves on the atemporal root of every form of becoming, reaches a dimension where every chronological division is telescoped and, being able to foretell the future and recall the past, can freely roam as a supreme *haṃsa* in the realms of eternity and time¹⁰.

Experiences like the aforesaid one are so far away from the rather fickle and generally short-lived states of clairvoyance in time studied by parapsychologists that one could be tempted to believe that they are of a totally different kind. But unless a convincing demonstration of this ontological difference is produced, it is perhaps more advisable and in any case possible to think that this difference, though an important one, is more of quantity than of quality.

9. Any reference to classical texts like *Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad* and Gauḍapāda's *Kārikā* would be superfluous here. Cf. also R. GUÉNON, *L'Homme et Son Devenir selon le Vedānta*, Paris, 1952th, p. 64: «...certaines extensions de l'individualité humaine, en dehors de sa modalité corporelle, échappent déjà au temps».

10. This triumphal condition is fittingly described in the last stanza of Abhinavagupta's *Anubhavanivedana*, where every form of succession is annihilated and even the sounds of the words are collected into the eternal unity of the super-temporal Sound: «*mantraḥ sa pratibhāti varṇaracanā yasmin na saṃlakṣyate*».

The Western man's attitude in face of time has been for long one of passive acceptance, of wishful hope or of lamenting despondency, almost always a recognition of its unavoidable rule. Within this general frame it was obviously impossible to reach anything more than fortuitous and incostant experiences of something else. But the new interest in the borderlands of human condition is now leading to significant developments: while some people propound excercises to overcome time¹¹, it cannot appear surprising that parapsychological researches about real or possible infractions or transcendence of the temporal rule have sometimes led to theories that have an unmistakable Indian flavour: in this context for example the hypotheses put forward by G. Murphy¹² and H. H. Price¹³ can be referred to.

3. Generally speaking, the differences between Indian and Western conceptions about dream and deep sleep bear ample testimony to the fact that our civilization, following the ancient rationalistic option of the Greeks, has always been centred, often with excessively unilateral rigour, upon the clear side of man, while Indian culture, like other extra-European ones¹⁴, has paid much more attention to the dark side of psychic experience¹⁵. In the contemporary Western rediscovery of dream and of the unconscious we are therefore allowed to perceive a sort of correction of an ancient error, a comeback to the forgotten language in which a large part of our life is trying to make itself understood¹⁶.

Freud voiced sometimes his misgivings about Indian spirituality, calling it a « puzzling labyrinth » where he « never felt tempted to

11. Cf. T. TULKU, *Time, Space and Knowledge*, Emeryville, 1977; etc.

12. According to him precognition, clairvoyance, etc., take place when interpersonal relations prevail and individualities, freed from their limits, sink together into the full and perfect reality.

13. He insisted on man's capability of transcending physical limitations provided that he is able to stop the working of his brain, which acts as a kind of filter between man and the almost infinite amount of messages arriving from the collective unconscious.

14. The importance of dreams, e.g. for Australian aborigines, as founding archetypically the human world, is well-known from the works of Rohéim, Elkin, etc.

15. Cf. AA. VV., *Il Sogno e le Civiltà Umane*, Bari, 1966. For a synthetic view of the values recognized to dream in Indian culture, cf. e.g. A. WAYMAN, *Significance of Dreams in India and Tibet*, HR, 7 (1967), pp. 1-12.

16. For the ancient Indian conception of the unconscious, cf. J. FILLIOZAT, *L'Inconscient dans la Psychologie Indienne*, « Proceedings of the Xth Intern. Congress of Philosophy », Amsterdam, 1948, repr. in Id., *Laghva-Prabandhāh*, Leiden, 1974, pp. 167-169; H. G. SINGH, *Psychotherapy in India from Vedic to Modern Times*, Agra, 1977; I. P. SACHDEV, *Yoga and Depth Psychology, with Special Reference to the Integration of Personality*, Delhi, 1978; cf. also C. T. KENGHE, *Yoga as Depth-Psychology & Parapsychology*, vol. II, Varanasi, 1976.

intrude »¹⁷, but had he had the opportunity or the will to yield to such temptation, he would have been richly rewarded¹⁸, because the multi-secular researches of the Indian ascetics can be of great relevance for any analysis of this subject, and also for opening new alleys of ideas, problems, etc., about the possibilities and functions of dreams¹⁹.

But perhaps we are still too much concentrated on the waking state and on dream as its annex: Indian traditions can lead us to suspect that there is something more to discover about the potentialities of that great mystery, deep sleep, which in India has not, at least commonly, been so much stigmatized for its alleged poverty of cognitive contents as it has been in the West. A scientific study of the noetic values of *susupti* is still a desideratum, and we are obviously not prepared to put forward definite proposals. Research in this field seems very difficult as it cannot be carried on with the same methodology as that concerning dreams²⁰, but scientists have always been ingenious enough to think out new experiments and devices whenever they seemed profitable. Quite probably, a better acquaintance with Indian conceptions about deep sleep, evidencing the values that have been recognized to it in that culture, will lead scientists to an increased attention to this phenomenon

17. Personal communication to Dr. E. G. Carpani, reproduced in E. G. CARPANI, *Psychology of Dream-Phenomena in Vedic Philosophy*, «Studi Internazionali di Scienze e Lettere», Vol. I: 1, 1956, p. 3.

18. Prof. Masson's studies, although in fields differing from those envisaged here, show how fruitful for psychoanalysis an exploration of Indian materials could be: cf. especially M. MASSON, *The Oceanic Feeling*, Dordrecht, 1980. F. STORY, *Dimensions of Buddhist Thought*, Kandy, 1976, p. 113, has insisted with reason on the limitations of Freudian dream-analysis.

19. Cf. PATANJALI, *Yogasūtra*, I, 38; etc. I. K. TAIMNI, *The Science of Yoga*, ital. transl., Rome, 1970, p. 92, rejects the usual interpretation of this *sūtra* on the ground that a person disturbed by *vikṣepa* and trying to overcome it cannot utilize the chaotic images of the oneiric state: therefore the *sūtra* should be taken as referring, not to what is passing on in the brain during sleep, but to some subtler condition. Whatever may be the real purport of the *sūtra*, no doubt could possibly be entertained that here dreams are regarded as instruments for reaching stability. For an analogous tāntrik technique, cf. *Vijñānabhairavatantra*, śloka 55 (and also BHAGWAN SHREE RAJNEESH, *The Book of the Secrets*, pp. 135-56): «*pīṇāṃ ca durbalāṃ śaktiṃ dhyātvā dvādaśagocare / pravīṣya hṛdaye dhyāyaṃ svapnasvātantryam āpnuyāt*», etc. This yogic utilization of dreams seems rooted in the most primordial levels of human culture: V. L. GOTTANELLI, *Ethnologica*, vol. III, Milan, 1966, repr., p. 374, refers to the «*autosuggestive directions of dreams*» in use among primitives. Of course, in *Yoga* this ability is employed with peculiarly specific aims. On the other side, one is reminded of the parapsychological technique, studied by H. H. L. Carrington, C. Green and others, of producing lucid dreams (cf. C. GREEN, *Lucid Dreams*, ital. transl., Turin, 1971), i.e. dreams where the dreaming subject is aware of their being dreams. These dreams produced by means of concentration on a particular scenery before sleeping, are said to have sometimes valid cognitive and even parapsychological contents: cf. C. TART, in D. S. ROGO (ed.), *Mind Beyond the Body*, ital. transl., Milan, 1979, p. 110.

20. Beside the psychoanalytic enquiry, we are obviously referring to the neuro-physiological approach to dreams on the basis of the registration of REMs by means of the application of encephalographs.

and to its intellectual potential, thus opening the way to a more integrated understanding of our everyday experience.

4. Meditational techniques and practices have found in India their home of choice. but seem to be, if not a universal constant, at least a widely spread occurrence in human culture. For this very reason the appeal of Indian spirituality from this point of view is obvious; moreover, with the breaking down of other religious and alike traditions in industrialized countries, this appeal is progressively increasing²¹. But this is too well-known: a number of scholars have already been engaged in the study of this phenomenon and in recent years a wider interest has been kindled owing to the diffusion of drugs and other means for producing altered states of consciousness²², which sometimes seem to trigger in a sudden way the same conditions that are carefully and meticulously prepared by the meditational practices; besides, Indian culture has the invaluable advantage of being capable to offer a wide range of doctrinal descriptions and explanations of these techniques and of their effects.

Along with the diffusion of the study of meditation in the West, more and more the idea is gaining ground that some kind of personal involvement and direct experience on the part of the scholars is extremely useful, and even necessary, for a deeper insight into this practice. Corrado Pensa, a leading Italian scholar in this field, has stressed the reasons for this involvement, laying emphasis on the beneficial results that can accrue on many levels for philosophers, scholars of psychology, students of comparative religion, etc.²³ from this kind of practice united with conceptual analysis.

Meditation can be considered now, following Deikman's interpretation²⁴, as a technique of de-automatization running against the usual path of perceptive experience and taking its adepts back to that primordial state where the noetic tissue reaches the subject directly, without the selective mediations and constructions that normally take place in any process of cognition²⁵. In the meditational path emotions are not always suppressed; they sometimes, on the contrary, are exalted

21. Cf. R. BELLAH, *Beyond Belief*, New York, 1970; C. PENZA, *L'Incontro fra Oriente e Occidente oggi*, Naples, 1975; M. BERGONZI, *Inchiesta sul nuovo misticismo*, Bari, 1980; etc. A good compendium of studies on meditation is P. CARRINGTON's, *Freedom in Meditation*, New York, 1977, ital. transl., Milan, 1979.

22. Cf. A. HUXLEY, *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell*, New York, 1963; R. C. ZAEHNER, *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane*, Oxford, 1957; C. TART, *Altered States of Consciousness*, New York, 1969; F. STAAL, *Exploring Mysticism*, Harmondsworth, 1975 (in a polemic vein against Eliade etc., Staal has tried to dispel what looks for him like a dangerous prejudice about the mystical potential of drugs).

23. Cf. C. PENZA, *La meditazione: Interpretazioni, Significati, Valori*, in AA. VV., *Uomo e Società nelle Religioni Asiatiche*, Rome, 1973, pp. 53-65.

24. Cf. A. DEIKMAN, *Deautomatization and the Mystic Experience*, «Psychiatry», XXIX, 1966, pp. 324-38; etc.

25. A somewhat analogous idea was entertained by Bergson, H. H. Price, etc.

to the highest possible degree, as is the case with *Bhakti* and Tantricism. Maslow's humanistic psychology²⁶ has rightly stressed the difference between peak-experience, characterized by intensity, emotionalism and brevity, and plateau-experiences, which are more enduring and have a greater epistemic value. This distinction, though useful, is not however to be taken as an irreconcilable incompatibility, and Pensa²⁷ has aptly called the attention on its overcoming in well-knit Indian metaphysical paths, like Patañjali's *Yoga* and Buddhism, with the last's typical coexistence of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*. (A practice of meditation following these paths, more explicitly in the case of Buddhism, but somehow also in the case of classical *Yoga*, *Kevalādvaita Vedānta*, Kāśmir Śaivism, etc., either through the relativization of the Ego-concept or, conversely, through its overcoming, reached by shifting the centre of the individual to the metapersonal *ātman*, can, besides, lead to an attitude of universal openness, also on the emotional sphere²⁸).

This field being really inexhaustible, we shall limit ourselves here to these few remarks, which may seem rather random reflections; their meaning is just an insistence on the central position that must be recognized to Yogic practice and teachings if we want to reach a less incomplete and unsatisfactory image of man and of his intellectual capabilities. We wish only to add that *Yoga* seems to have already exercised a kind of seminal function for some of the Western techniques of relax that envisage man as a potentially self-regulating system: for no other reason the autogenic training has been dubbed a Western *Yoga* by its inventor, J. H. Schulz, and his followers²⁹, and from *Yoga* came the first impulse to create sophrology to Dr. A. Caycedo³⁰. Apart from physical exercises, an important role is assigned in both these techniques to practices of the *bhāvanā* kind.

5. But let us proceed further, and turn to the properly parapsychological field. As already pointed out, we are inclined to think that contemporary students of the borderlands of human consciousness are hesitatingly and gropingly putting again together the tassels that constitute the synthetic mosaic of living Indian spirituality. One of the problems with which parapsychologists are confronted is represented by the necessity of suppressing whatever external stimulus in order to

26. Cf. A. MASLOW, *Religions, Values and Peak Experiences*, New York, 1970^{3rd}.

27. Cf. *Notes on Meditational States in Buddhism and Yoga*, EW, 27 (1977), pp. 335-44.

28. Here could also be found a basis for a new ecology, cf. e.g. M. BERGONZI, *op. cit.*, *passim*, and the well-known works of E. F. SCHUMACHER, *Small is Beautiful*, London, 1973, *A Guide for the Perplexed*, London, 1977, etc.

29. Cf. J. H. SCHULZ, *Autogenic Therapy*, New York, 1969; G. EBERLEIN, *Gesund durch Autogenes Training*, Düsseldorf und Wien, 1973, ital. transl., Milan, 1975, pp. 5-6; etc.

30. Cf. Y. DAVROU, J. C. MACQUET, *Le Guide Pratique de la Sophrologie*, ital. transl., Rome, 1979, pp. 19-20.

reach a state of sensory deprivation which is supposed to lead more easily to ESP experience: to this end the subject may be closed into a dark and acoustically isolated room, or immersed into a tub full of water of the same temperature as his body, etc.³¹. But what are these if not external aids (or instruments for cancelling external hindrances) to *pratyāhāra*? Of course, the aim of these parapsychological practices can sometimes be different, sensory deprivation may be provoked in order to produce altered states of consciousness. In both Yogic and parapsychological techniques, however, the annihilation of external noise seems a prerequisite for listening to the subdued voice of the submerged part of the human iceberg.

An increasing number of parapsychologists are now interested in out-of-body experiences (the so-called OBE)³². The subjective reality of these feats of bilocation is out of discussion, while their objectivity is being currently tested, with some amount of success. These ecsomatic experiences seem to have some relation to meditation, at least from the physiological point of view: the cerebral waves concerned, mainly alpha waves, appear to follow the same curve, etc.³³. Thus OBE too could be judged as an erratic and fragmentary pregustration of the *rasa* of *Yoga*. This has been lucidly recognized by some parapsychologists: for instance D. S. Rogo³⁴ has remarked that the modifications of the rhythm of breath and of the heart-beat and the decrease of mental activity that take place during OBE are quite similar to some outcomes of Yogic practices. (The same scholar supposes, though with some hesitation, that the so-called astral body or projection which is sometimes believed to travel during events of bilocation may be formed from the surrounding atmosphere³⁵; may we not suppose that it is formed out of *prāṇa*, which knows no real difference whether it is inside or outside of physical bodies?). Another scholar, M. Grosso, while expressly referring to *Vivekacūḍāmani*³⁶, traditionally ascribed to Śaṅkara, points out that the seemingly paradoxical statement so frequent in India about the erroneous nature of the identification of man with his body may have some credibility in the light of OBE and connected transfer of consciousness. If this may sound too far-fetched, we may at least submit that the ecsomatic ex-

31. Cf. W. BRAUD, *Tecniche per accrescere le facoltà paranormali*, « Il mondo della Parapsicologia », I, 1, febbraio 1980, pp. 38-43. An attenuated form of sensory deprivation is the so-called *Ganzfeld*, an experiment with the subject comfortably sitting on a chair in front of a light in an isolated room, while having both eyes covered by two halves of plastic spheres. The subject is asked to follow and describe his free associations of ideas, while another subject, in an adjoining room, tries to influence him telepathically.

32. A good reading on this subject is provided by D. S. ROGO (ed.), *op. cit.*

33. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 110-11, and, for meditation, P. CARRINGTON, *op. cit.*, ital. transl., pp. 58-9, 63.

34. *Op. cit.*, p. 165.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

periences can probably lead to, and certainly do not invalidate, the conviction « that man is the "Great Amphibian" inhabiting several worlds of awareness »³⁷, that his consciousness has a multifarious set of possibilities at his disposal, for instance of being in the body, its usual dwelling-place, and also, more rarely, by chance or study, of being somewhere else, « outside ». The already available documentation drawn from studies carried on Indian *Yogins* and *Sādhus*, but also on shamans, sorcerers, medicine-men etc. of people of ethnological level, can testify to the psychological and sometimes gnoseological reality of these facts³⁸. In this field, again, the convergence of Indian metaphysics with contemporary research can therefore lead to startling results, dissolving ancient and apparently well-rooted, but really staggering, identifications of man.

6. The physical feats achieved by *Yogins*, *Sādhus*, etc., their insensibility to pain, and even freedom from the visible signs of it, their incombustibility, their apparent control and command on involuntary muscles³⁹, etc. are too well-known to be recalled here. They should however always be kept in mind, as an indisputable evidence of how crippled is the usual image of man and of the range of his possibilities.

For different but converging reasons, according with the limits we have chosen for ourselves here, it is not possible to deal with other important fields of Indian metaphysical anthropology, like esoteric physiology⁴⁰, even if we wonder whether the more complex maps of human dimensions accepted in India are only by chance or through borrowing paralleled by so many striking homologies in the gnostic traditions of the West. We may at least incidentally recall the speculations of some European philosophers and occultists concerning the pineal gland, which has perhaps some relations with *ājñācakra*⁴¹.

7. Many more possible fields of research could be envisaged. Since in man, the cultural animal *par excellence*, there is an obvious interplay of culture and consciousness, among the most fascinating perspectives, but also one of a very controversial nature, would be that opened by

37. C. T. K. CHARI, *From Structuralism to a Mystical Personalism*, in K. S. MURTY and K. R. RAO (eds.), *Current Trends in Indian Philosophy*, Waltair, 1972, p. 81.

38. We may limit ourselves to quote the well-known OBE case of Ugeima Uzago, reported by Father Trilles and repeatedly studied.

39. While many scholars, yogic practitioners and laymen believed that at least some *Yogins* were able to stop their heart-beats, this pretended ability seems undemonstrated in the light of more sophisticated tests of control; the capacity of slowing down the heart-beats is, in any case, beyond doubt. For this point cf. *Seminar on Yoga, Science and Man*, New Delhi, 1976, p. 293.

40. In other fields the latest developments of science lead to its objective convergence with Indian metaphysics, but here *Yoga* and science remain too far away from each other to allow a fruitful research on the possible contributions of the first to the second.

41. For this, cf. e.g. L. P. SINGH, *Tantra, Its Mystic and Scientific Basis*, Delhi, 1976, pp. 74-5.

an approach along classical Indian lines to our primary cultural instrument, language. B. L. Whorf tried to show how the Indian doctrines of different planes of consciousness, while having a definite bearing on the analysis of language, can lead to a better understanding of man's inner structure. He expressly remarked that «the road out of illusion for the West lies through a wider understanding of language than Western Indo-European alone can give. This is the "Mantra-Yoga" of the Western consciousness, the next great step, which is now ready to take. It is probably — he added — the most suitable way for Western man to begin that "culture of consciousness" which will lead him to a great illumination»⁴²... More modestly, and perhaps less controversially, we may surmise that the vividly burning focus of attention can probably lead to a better understanding of the nuclear semantic seed from which the different meanings of a word arise⁴³. Thus by the help of a mantric evocation and of *ekāgratā* a deeper insight into the nature of a given language and by consequence also into the working of human mind could perhaps be reached...⁴⁴.

But we cannot expand on this subject and go further into necessary details. Our paper must come to end. Whatever its limits, we hope to have been able to show that Indian culture, even without or before embarking for the metaphysical realms, can be of the utmost relevance for the shaping of a more consistent and less poor image of man.

From some quarters the objection may be raised that the image that we have proposed here is not new, but it is rather a very old one. This may be partly true: after all, Myers' theory of progeneration, i.e. a progressive increase of paranormal phenomena and powers, has been dismissed since long and these phenomena are now often judged as regressive, and even disregarded for their alleged connection with an obscurantist age of our history. This we do not accept. Although we do not believe, as some traditionalists do⁴⁵, that three thousand years, or

42. B. L. WHORF, *Language, Mind, and Reality*, in Id., *Language, Thought, and Reality*, Cambridge, Mass., 1956, p. 263 (this paper was first published in «The Theosophist», Madras, 63, 1942, No. 1, pp. 281-91, No. 2, pp. 25-37). A somewhat analogous idea flashed perhaps into Thoreau's mind: cf. E. ZOLLA, *Per il Decennale di «Conoscenza Religiosa»*, «Conoscenza Religiosa», 1978, p. 311: «Thoreau tried to build his own Yoga, and even a Tantra based on the English sounds».

43. For a similar idea, cf. G. R. FRANCI, *Le Idee Linguistiche di Sri Aurobindo*, in Id., *Saggi Indologici*, Bologna, 1969, pp. 55-62.

44. This hypothesis has, at least in our opinion, a more limited range than any search along Humboldtian lines after the «innere Form» of a language. Somewhat similar are the penetrating, though sometimes too far-fetched observations spread by H. Nakamura in the initial paragraphs of the chapters devoted to Indian culture in his *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples*, Honolulu, 1964. For a recent study of «the possibility that different languages embody different forms of understanding» cf. B. A. SCHARFSTEIN (ed.), *Philosophy East / Philosophy West*, Oxford, 1978, pp. 11-28 (the line quoted is on page 15).

45. The obvious reference is to R. GUÉNON, *La Crise du Monde Moderne*, Paris, 1947^{2nd}, J. EVOLA, *Rivolta contro il Mondo Moderno*, Rome, 1969^{3rd}, etc.

more, of Western civilization are only a parenthesis or a pathological event, we do believe that the ancient thread of integral anthropology must be taken again into our hands, if we do not want to remain passively bound to a set of dangerous conditions where man seems more a lost opportunity than a fully blown reality. (There will be, in any case, something creatively new in such a coming back, achieved and enjoyed by people of deeply different conditions).

Besides, Indology has some added responsibility owing to the spread of a new wave of «mysticism» of Indian origin, which could be considered as a belated and diluted but still recognizable form of Sanskritization. In front of the great interest aroused, which is a clear indication of unmistakable needs, but also in presence of all too evident dangers of misinformation, over-enthusiasm, exploitation, etc., Indology is called to a new and exciting task. In the anthropological field it can, certainly better than many would-be prophets and *gurus*, present the ancient and yet modern Indian image of man as an integrated being, open to the different levels of reality, able to dive into himself to find his essential values and powers there. But, even beyond this or any other contingent occasion, Indology, as we have tried to show, must take part as a member of full right in the project of anthropological research sketched by H. Bender, the German parapsychologist: «To a future doctrine of man... it behoves to organize in its entirety our empirical knowledge of the other side of reality... The integration of the order of the physical world with the other one into a scientific vision of the world... is a task for future research of all sciences»⁴⁶. For such an aim Indian studies, by way of addition, suggestion and correction, have much to say and to give.

46. *Unser Sechster Sinn*, ital. transl., Milan, 1974, p. 155.

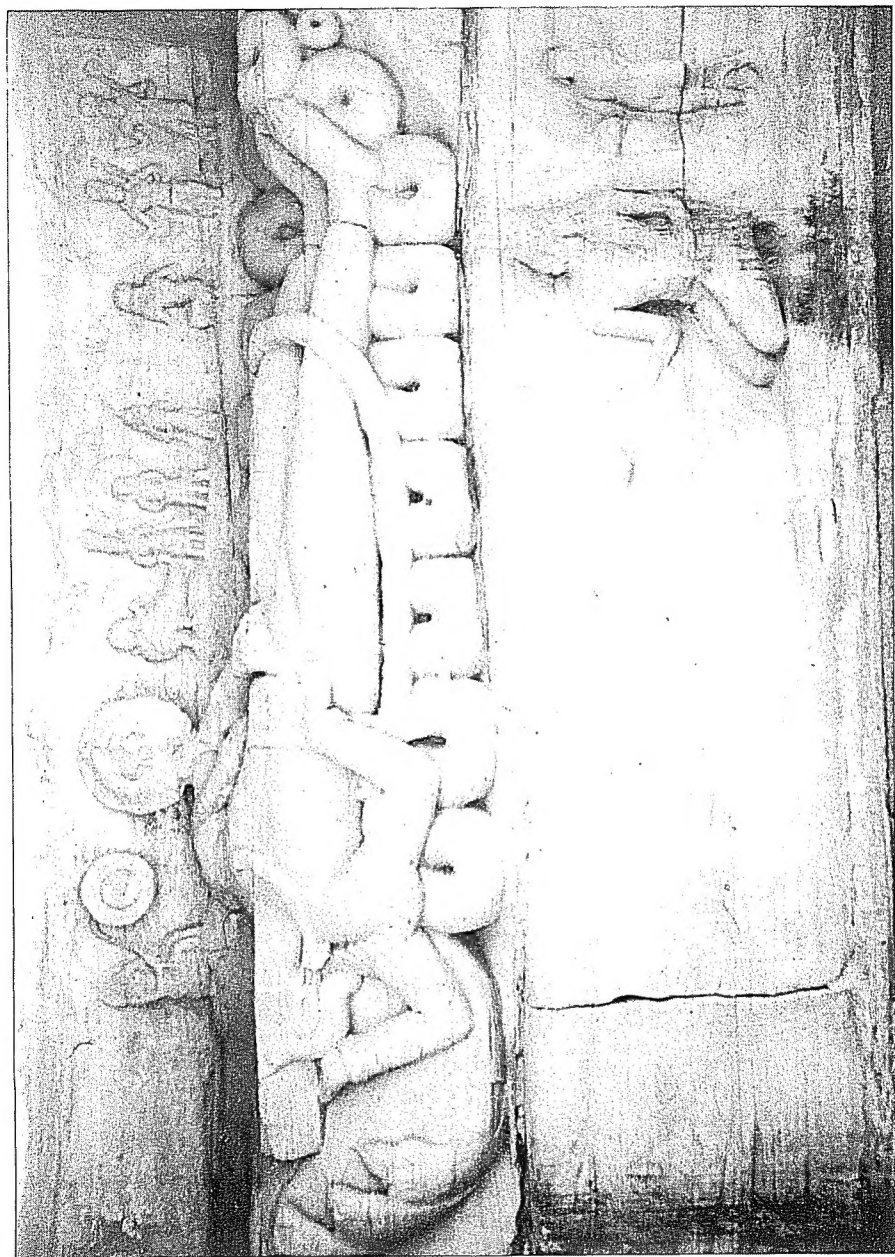


Abb. 1: Viṣṇu Śeṣaśayin in Udayagiri, M.P. (5.Jh.A.D.)



Abb. 2: Det. von Abb. 1: (von links) Gadiādevī, Cakrapuruṣa und Śāringastri